



Speech by

Mr BRUCE LAMING

MEMBER FOR MOOLOOLAH

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MARINE COLLISION; MOUNTAIN CREEK STATE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mr LAMING (Mooloolah—LP) (7.25 p.m.): I rise tonight to speak on two issues. The first is to do with a marine collision. The second is in relation to education facility demands in my electorate. The marine collision occurred on 2 February this year, 32 nautical miles off Noosa. I made some inquiries locally and it seems that a Mooloolaba prawn trawler, the Tina, was anchored up off Noosa in the middle of the day after a long night's work. I spoke to the skipper of the Tina last week and was advised that, after cleaning up, the crew went below to sleep. At about midday, they were awoken by the sound of a ship's siren obviously very close to them. On emerging from below decks, they saw a Taiwanese-registered bulk carrier bearing down on them and making last-minute alterations to change course to starboard to avoid colliding with the trawler. Evidently, the port bow of the ship struck the boom of the Tina, causing minor damage to both vessels. The trawler skipper contacted the authorities and headed back to Mooloolaba.

As a result of this incident, the skipper was fined \$3,500. There is an issue with this penalty, as the skipper has told me that the prosecution proceeded without his being issued with a summons to appear. This is being appealed, and it would not be appropriate for me to pass comment on a matter before the court as to the procedures, the facts or the regulations covering collisions at sea. However, I am concerned that a local fisherman has been prosecuted while the owner or skipper of the bulk carrier has not, to my knowledge, been brought to court. It is possible that Queensland Transport is not the competent authority to pursue an overseas registered ship. However, as a matter of equity, I cannot condone a situation where a local fisherman is prosecuted if the other party, who must share the blame for the incident, is not prosecuted at the same time.

I have written to the Minister for Transport outlining my concerns about what appears to be an inequitable approach to this incident and have asked for a briefing. Because there appear to be other issues involved I am bringing this to the attention of the House. Although I am not an expert at all in apportioning blame for a collision at sea, I cannot accept that there would not be a fair proportion of blame attaching to a vessel under way that collides with an anchored vessel. Furthermore, I have been advised by the trawler skipper that the ship did not stop following the collision to render aid, if necessary. If this is so, this aspect should be followed up vigorously. There could have been injuries, or the ship might have been damaged and sinking. I would also like to know whether the ship's captain or crew made radio contact with any Queensland or Australian port or maritime authority to report the incident. If not, why not? Surely this is common decency, if not a maritime requirement.

Fortunately, the Tina is a sturdy steel vessel with an experienced crew, but this incident might have involved a more vulnerable craft with less experienced people—even children—on board. This issue must be followed up by both State and Federal authorities to ensure that our offshore waters, whether used by commercial or recreational sailors, are as safe as possible.

The second issue which I wish to raise tonight is in relation to the enrolment pressures being experienced at the Mountain Creek Primary School. Both this school and the adjacent Mountain Creek State High School are new schools that have suffered, in a sense, from their own popularity. This popularity is due only in part to their location and the fact that they are new schools. Both have had the benefit of great principals, staff, P & C associations and, of course, students. Both schools have had to employ enrolment management plans, which have included enrolment boundaries, to cope with their

rapid growth. The primary school has had year-beginning enrolments of: in 1997, 900; in 1998, 920; in 1999, 1,051; and numbers now exceed 1,130.

The situation will become critical next year with a possible compromise of effective delivery of Education Queensland goals. The options put forward include a further tightening of enrolment boundaries or the ability of the school to expand into the adjacent buildings now occupied by the district education office. I believe the latter is the more effective option; and although I am not keen to turf the district office staff out of their premises, the education of our children must come first, and other premises can be found for an administrative function. I call on the Minister to investigate this situation as a matter of urgency.
